



The Truth ^{90 cop. 2} **About Cuba**



Cop. 2

The Truth About Cuba

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This pamphlet consists of a series of articles, written in defense of the Cuban Revolution, which appeared in the Militant from May 9 to August 22, 1960.

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"Operation Brainwash"

In their plush skyscraper offices at 444 Madison Avenue, high above Manhattan's famous street of hucksters, the editors and executives of one of the country's most widely circulated magazines were planning their April 25 issue. To anyone but these cynics, the problem might have seemed tough. Where should they turn the crystal ball? What was the most important spot in the world news?

Newsweek's top forecasters didn't take long to decide. Cuba, of course. The tiny, poverty-stricken island of Cuba down there in the Caribbean just ninety miles from Florida.

This is the startling prediction they put as No. 1 item in "The Periscope," that fast-reading dish of inside dope that keeps you "Ahead of the News":

"STATE DEPARTMENT — Will Castro sever relations with the U.S. soon? This is highly possible — maybe on May Day. Another possibility for May Day, when 1.5 million highly volatile Cubans will be on the streets: A violent showdown between Castro and the growing opposition to his regime. Still another possibility, according to well-placed diplomats: That Castro will unveil a number of Red-built MIG jet fighters said to have arrived on a Czech freighter recently."

Was the prediction accurate? An honest question like that is good for a laugh at 444 Madison Avenue. That was no prediction; it was bait for the suckers.

Some relations were severed all right. On April 28 Guatemala severed diplomatic relations with Cuba. United Fruit, a giant Wall Street monopoly, dominates Guatemala; United Fruit also has large holdings in Cuba; United Fruit doesn't like Castro.

Was there a "violent showdown" in Cuba May 1? No. Instead some 1,200,000 farm and city workers paraded in every city and town to demonstrate their solidarity and their support of the government they put in power through a popular revolution like our revolution of 1776.

Did Castro "unveil a number of Red-built MIG jet fighters"? All Castro did was "unveil" another school April 29, a school converted from a military barracks.

But if you had read Newsweek's "prediction" without stopping to think, would you have felt favorably impressed by the Castro government? Would you have felt like visiting Cuba?

Let's sample something a little less slick. Not a "pre-

diction" hand-tooled by the Madison Avenue craftsmen, but a rough-talking editorial from the Sarasota, Florida, Herald Tribune. It was inserted in the April 29 Congressional Record by Senator Russell B. Long, who represents Louisiana's sugar-cane barons:

"The Cuban regime has failed to honor its international agreements, has brutalized its own citizens, and is not worthy of the diplomatic recognition the U.S. Government has extended . . .

"Castro has turned Cuba into an armed camp, with even children and parents drilling in the streets. He has spent millions of dollars for war materials in Europe, and is even now concluding a deal with Communist Poland to obtain Russian-built jet aircraft.

"How long are we going to continue to subsidize this dictatorship with millions of dollars in payment for sugar at prices above the world market? How long are we going to continue to lend prestige to this strutting megalomaniac by extending formal diplomatic recognition?"

The propaganda has a deadly familiar ring. It is the language used to create a hated image in your mind — the image of The Enemy. The calculation is that if enough loaded words like these are fed to the public, and the public is not given a chance to hear the intended victim, then everybody will agree that The Enemy should be CRUSHED—even if it's a little country like Cuba.

Why are the billionaire monopolists, the Madison Avenue hucksters and the Southern racists so concerned over Cuba? Why do they want to break off diplomatic relations and smash the new government?

The truth is that the Cuban revolution wounded them where it hurts most — in the pocketbook. They are afraid the Cuban example will spread throughout Latin America. They fear it will help strengthen the struggle for Negro equality in the United States.

A favorite theme of the capitalist press is that the new Cuban government is doing everything it can to "provoke" the United States.

Here we are in the U.S., an easy-going people like the Swiss, inclined to mind our own business, anxious just to get by and live in peace, not bothering anybody; and then, for no good reason at all, this big, paranoiac country of Cuba, a militaristic nation armed to the teeth, suddenly starts pushing us around, like it was trying to start something. Most ominous of all, according to this way of report-

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ing recent developments, the Cubans began screaming subversive anti-American sentiments at us. That, of course, proves the existence of a sinister plot, the ultimate aim of which is to move in on our country and take us over.

If you visit Cuba, you get a different impression. It's a small narrow island that would reach from San Francisco to about Salt Lake City. In area it's no bigger than Pennsylvania. They guess that the census now being taken will show about six and a half million people.

Although the countryside is a lush tropical green, the people are poor. Here's how Robert Taber, in the Jan. 23 Nation, succinctly described their situation before the revolution that overthrew the Batista dictatorship.

"Cuba's illiteracy rate was one of the highest in the hemisphere, 33.5 per cent. A million Cuban women and children had never worn shoes. Half a million **campesinos** had never tasted milk, or meat. More than a million had never had even the most rudimentary medical care. Thousands of **guajiros** in the Sierra Maestra were as isolated from the rest of the nation as though they lived on an island in the Pacific, without roads, communications, or any contact with the outside world."

To go to Cuba and talk with these people is highly educational. They are most friendly. In fact they are eager for Americans to visit Cuba. If you ask them about their revolution they will go out of their way to explain it to you, for they are as proud of it as we are of our revolution of 1776. In fact you'll find much in common, for they like to cite us as one of their examples. From Patrick Henry's famous words they even chose the main slogan of their revolution: "Liberty or Death!"

But you had better brace yourself for a shock if you haven't done a little reading about Cuba before landing in Havana. They think that in its attitude toward struggles for independence the USA has changed considerably since 1776. They look at the United States today the way our revolutionary forefathers looked at Tory England. Instead of acting as a good neighbor, America, they are convinced, has done them great damage. It has forced their economy into abnormal shape, siphoned off their wealth, and saddled them with oppressive regimes.

They do not blame the American people. Their experience is that the ordinary American is a well-meaning, favorably disposed person; unfortunately he doesn't know much about Cuba or any other Latin-American country

and he is inclined to accept as gospel whatever he reads in the newspapers. The Cubans blame the financiers and monopolists, who, in contrast to the working man, study Latin America assiduously and are very alert to economics and politics below the Rio Grande.

Why U.S. Sent Troops

One of the things that rankle with the Cubans is a long-standing tendency in Washington to look at their country as a prize to be taken like the Louisiana Purchase or Texas, California, and the other parts of the West which we seized from Mexico. They can quote declarations going back as far as Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams on the advisability of eventually grabbing Cuba. They cite proposals of statesmen of the Southern slavocracy to wrest Cuba from Spain and make it another slave state.

Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain began in 1868. It is the conviction of the Cubans that this struggle could have been won rather rapidly had aid been forthcoming from America. Instead, Washington's policy was to prevent Cuba from gaining her independence, the reasoning being that it was better to let the declining Spanish empire retain rule until the "fruit" became "ripe" whereupon it could be expected to drop into the waiting American lap.

Cuba's freedom fighters continued to battle against the Spanish tyranny. By 1898 victory was in their hands. However, in January of that year President McKinley began open preparations for war on Spain. At the end of the month, the U.S. battleship "Maine" was sent to Havana harbor. On February 15 it blew up with a loss of 266 lives. The true cause of the explosion was never determined, but the suspicion remains that it was a cloak-and-dagger operation hatched in Washington.

In any case, utilizing the explosion as a pretext, Congress voted \$50,000,000 "for the national defense" and on March 25 declared that a state of war had existed with Spain for four days.

American troops were landed in Cuba under the proclaimed aim of aiding the Cuban struggle for independence. The Spanish-American War was short. Spain signed a peace treaty on December 10 ceding the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico outright to the United States and relinquishing

Cuba. But American troops did not leave the island. They stayed four years as an army of occupation.

Among the things this army did was to prevent the Cubans from forming a government of their own free choice. The Wall Street interests sought to annex Cuba. However, public clamor rose in the United States against such a brazen move. The Democratic party, in striking contrast to its present-day, bipartisan, "me too" attitude, made an issue in the 1900 elections of "Republican" imperialism. "Imperialism," whether Republican or Democratic, was an accurate label for America's new role in world affairs.

Today, to expose the hypocrisy of State Department propaganda, the Cubans remind Americans of that army of occupation. "You demand that the Castro government hold immediate elections," they say. "But when your army occupied our country, you prevented elections from being held for four years."

President McKinley sent American troops to intervene in the civil war in Cuba in 1898 ostensibly to aid the independence movement. His real reason was to make Cuba safe for American investments. That was why the troops were kept there for four years. By the time they were ready to leave, Cuba was safe for the Almighty Dollar.

By 1959 private American capital investments were listed at around \$850,000,000. This does not sound like very much compared, say, to the some \$2,000,000,000 which the Pentagon and State Department are reputed to take out of the public till each year for nothing but world-wide spying. But America's financial sharks are noted for their exceptionally strong parental instincts. They suffer agonies if the smallest investment is endangered; they will fight ferociously to protect it from harm; and they are fabled for their solicitude in providing it with human flesh, bones and nerves so that it will prosper and grow.

Thus a half century after the American troops were withdrawn, at least 40% of the sugar production in Cuba was held by U.S. corporations. About 90% of the island's mineral wealth was in the hands of Americans and 80% of public utilities. Cuba's oil resources were completely owned by American and British corporations. The biggest cattle ranches were likewise listed in the investment portfolios of American coupon clippers.

How much wealth was funneled from Cuba into Ameri-

can bank accounts since Cuba fell into Wall Street's orbit is not known. At present the Cuban government has been opening the books of the big corporations to try to get an idea. When the facts are made public, they should make interesting reading.

Even worse than the exhausting drain of profits wrung from the toil of the Cuban workers and campesinos, were the pernicious effects on the structure of the economy. Cuba became a **one-crop** country.

This does not mean much to American workers when they first hear about it. "So what?" they ask.

World's Sugar Bowl

If we had a world-wide, integrated economy run according to scientific plan, a small country would very likely find it advantageous to concentrate on what its resources, climate and skills best enable it to produce. Bolivia's tin, Venezuela's oil and Cuba's sugar might then be regarded as the most important contributions to the satisfaction of humanity's material needs that could be produced in these countries for some time to come. Under capitalism, however, a one-crop economy compounds and intensifies the ordinary evils of this antiquated way of producing our basic necessities. The life of an entire nation becomes subject, sometimes to a disastrous degree, to the vagaries of the market and to the whim and calculations of a handful of ruthless, profit-minded monopolists.

In Cuba, sugar customarily accounted for two-thirds of the national income and 80% of exports. Property holdings became so concentrated that until the agrarian reform of a year ago, 75% of all the cultivated land was held by some 8% of the country's property owners. About 700,000 peasants held no land at all.

Taber summarizes figures indicating the situation facing the working class as follows:

"Of the total Cuban labor force of 2,204,000, some 361,000 persons were wholly unemployed throughout 1957; 150,000 were employed only part of the time; 154,000 were engaged in unremunerated labor — e.g., as domestic servants, working for their meals and lodgings. Of 1,539,000 Cubans gainfully employed, 954,000 earned less than \$75 a month in a nation where the peso was on a par with the dollar and had even less purchasing power in Havana than in New York."

These are graphic figures; but they fail to indicate the plight of the 500,000 sugar workers in Cuba's main industry.

Employment for them existed each year only during the four months of the harvest. The other eight months were known as the "dead time."

For an American worker to grasp the meaning of that, he would have to recall in all its vividness the great depression of the thirties. That was a "dead time" in the richest country in the world, when it seemed hopeless to find work and millions found themselves reduced to beggary.

In poverty-stricken Cuba, eight months out of each year counted as a major depression for the bulk of the working people. The misery, suffering and hopelessness they experienced make for bleak reading. It is must reading, however, if you want to understand the reasons for the sensitivity of the Cubans to what happens in Washington and the counting houses of Manhattan.

They ate malanga, which is something like a straight potato diet. Sugar cane was a second staple. Thus they grew up stunted and subject to vitamin deficiency diseases.

They lived in huts called **bohios**. No floor, just the bare earth. A roof made of thatch from the royal palm, much appreciated by all kinds of insects.

Their clothes, more often than not, were patched rags.

They went barefoot although this is hazardous in tropical countries.

They went without dental care, losing their teeth when they were still young. And they went without medical care.

As for education, some 2,000,000 Cubans could neither read nor write.

Tens of thousands of fertile acres, growing to weeds, were available for cultivation, but feudal-minded landlords barred this. Cuba's long-suffering victims of chronic hunger, malnutrition and abysmal poverty had to avoid trespassing on land that really belonged to the people as a whole. To heighten their bitterness, Wall Street's propagandists made sure that they heard all about the "free world" and its wonders, particularly the prosperous "American Way of Life."

The American propagandists need not have rubbed it in. The Cuban masses were well prepared to desire a change in their way of life.

Uncle Sam as "Big Brother"

American domination of Cuba can be divided into five stages.

First came the period of direct military rule over the

island under General John R. Brooke and later Major General Leonard Wood. The aim of U.S. military occupation was to make the country safe for American investments. This included such progressive things as stamping out yellow fever and introducing modern sanitation, but these measures were linked with a major political objective: to block the Cuban independence fighters from government office and to set up a structure of rule best suited to guarantee high profits.

By May 20, 1902, when the army of occupation was withdrawn, Cuba was well prepared for penetration of the dollar. Elections had been supervised by the American military forces, the candidates thoroughly screened. The constitution had been processed under General Wood's vigilant eye. As a final guarantee, an amendment to the constitution, fathered by Senator Orville H. Platt of Connecticut, had been forced down the throat of the new Cuban government.

This notorious appendix obliged the Cubans to ratify everything done by the military occupation, forbade any government loans that could not be paid off through an excess above current revenues, forbade any foreign treaties not approved by Washington, gave the U.S. the right to intervene in Cuba's internal affairs whenever necessary to maintain "a government adequate for the protection of life, property and individual liberty," and finally, to make everything doubly sure, gave the U.S. the right to buy or lease lands necessary for military bases.

Under the latter clause, American troops have been stationed in Cuba ever since. These have been supplemented from time to time by the landing of marines to maintain the kind of government favored by Wall Street.

In the second stage of American domination the Wall Street locusts settled on highly profitable economic concessions and contracts.

Under the administration (1909-13) of Jose Miguel Gomez, a typical Latin-American caudillo, or military chief, the third stage of American economic domination opened. This was the period of the sugar barons, who converted Cuba to a one-crop economy. They consolidated their position under President Mario G. Menocal, an employee of the Cuban-American Sugar Company, who stole a second term and remained in office under the protection of U.S. marines until 1922.

During Menocal's second term a new stage of American domination opened. The Morgan gang, National City Bank, the Royal Bank of Canada, and Chase National Bank became the real rulers of Cuba and they rapidly brought the sugar industry under their control. They entrenched themselves under Alfredo Zayas, who stole the 1921 elections, and Gerardo Machado (elected 1925, overthrown 1933).

Finally we come to the Batista period, which lasted with interruptions from 1933 to 1959. We will consider this stage later.

Carleton Beals, in his book "The Crime of Cuba," describes the first four stages in considerable detail. He summarizes the economic side as follows:

"1900 to 1917 marks the gradual infiltration of American capital, the pace ever quickening toward the end of the span. 1917 to 1922 marks a virtual tidal wave of American capital investment. Those years also mark the beginning of bankers' control over sugar and other resources. By the 1922 crisis J. P. Morgan and Company, Chase National Bank, National City Bank, and allied Canadian institutions moved into dominance, ever expanding their equities in the industrial and agricultural enterprises. 1922 to 1933 marks the definite consolidation of bankers' control. Through the Electric Bond and Share Company and the International Telephone and Telegraph Company, close to the house of Morgan, public utilities were gathered into the fold. Most railroads, not in English hands, are controlled by the Tarafa-Woodin-Rubens-Lakin-Rockefeller combination, closely harmonized with the American Car and Foundry Company and the National City Bank. Cubans own far less of the wealth of their country than in 1895."

Beals indicates the extent of American domination of Cuba by 1933 as follows:

"One-third of Cuba's territory, nearly 90 percent of the cultivated lands of the island, is owned or controlled by long-time leases by Americans or American corporations. The remainder is largely mortgaged to American banks and creditors. Eighty percent of the sugar industry belongs to citizens of the United States; the rest is controlled chiefly by American creditors. Cuba's second industry — tobacco — is also mostly American. Nearly all the banks, railroads, street-car lines, electric plants, telephone systems and other public utilities are owned by capital from the United States."

Subservient to Washington to begin with, Cuba's governments came increasingly into the service of American imperialism. Shocking poverty and lack of economic opportunity helped foster the growing corruption of public office. Once behind a government desk, the average Cuban

official immediately went to work to sweeten up his own bank account at the expense of the public treasury. In this he was abetted by the American ambassadors, for they were there, among other things, to facilitate plunder of the Cuban treasury, in the form of loans, by Manhattan's financial pirates.

Regime of the "Sawed-off Shotgun"

As public dissatisfaction and unrest mounted over this state of affairs, Cuba's military forces grew in size, venality and ferocity. This tendency, deliberately fostered by Wall Street and the State Department, reached its culmination in the government of Gerardo Machado. His became known as the regime of the "Sawed-Off Shotgun." He smashed the trade unions, murdering their leaders. He butchered politically minded students, finally closing down the University of Havana and many lesser schools. He suppressed all opposition, jailing, torturing and killing any who dared to hint lack of enthusiasm about the way he ran things. Professional criminals, preferably murderers, became candidates for his gangs of killers, both official and unofficial, and he put his armed henchmen in control of the most ordinary civic institutions to prevent them from becoming centers of resistance.

Resistance mounted, nevertheless. The dictator, relying on the backing of the U.S. government, refused to give an inch. He swore that no power would dislodge him from office. On May 20, 1930, reviewing his troops, he declared that "before resigning the Presidency of the Republic, I will drown the island in blood."

Among those who joined conspicuously in the applause was Ambassador Harry F. Guggenheim of Anaconda Copper, the American Smelting and Refining Company, and the New York banks interested in Cuban sugar.

Ruling as a political servant of America's top financial interests, Dictator Gerardo Machado brought Cuba's army to peak strength. Since the country has no land frontiers to dispute over, the desire to have a big military machine appeared irrational to many Cubans. However, from the viewpoint of the cold-eyed men who survey this world from the countinghouses of Manhattan, nothing is more reasonable than a disciplined body of killers, armed with modern weapons, to protect the source of your profits.

The Cuban people did not yet grasp the full meaning

of this murderous force, bristling with arms, which had been put together under the political guidance of the State Department and trained under American officers. They saw Machado, not the military institution, as the prime source of the terror inflicted upon them. And it must be recognized that Machado did all he could in a personal way to deserve the nationwide fear, bitterness and hatred turned in his direction.

The people acted as people will under tyranny. Some tried short cuts, venting their feelings in individual heroic — if ineffective — acts, such as exploding bombs and killing the worst public officials in suicidal gestures of despair. The students began organizing more effective political protest demonstrations. Spontaneous strikes broke out. The Communist party, although it had been outlawed since 1925, gained recruits from all sides. A Havana bus strike spread like a chain reaction throughout the island. "This general strike is a marvelous thing," the wife of the New York Times correspondent wrote in her diary August 6, 1933. "An entire nation folds its arms and quits work."

Sumner Welles had arrived as American ambassador in May. He began his work by urging Machado to resign. But the dictator took a stubborn attitude. The culmination of Welles' intervention was action by the military staff. For the first time in Cuba, the army displayed the power it had gained. The top brass informed Machado, who had built the military institution into a main instrument of rule, that his usefulness as president had ended. They advised him to resign within twenty-four hours.

Machado decided that the advice was good. On August 12 he took a "leave of absence" and left for the U.S., bullets whistling past his plane as it rose from the field.

On August 14 Carlos Manuel de Cespedes was sworn in. The conservative son of an illustrious leader in Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain, he had proved his docility by serving in Machado's cabinet. He was the choice of Sumner Welles.

But the concession of putting the name "Cespedes" in office did not halt the developing revolutionary movement. The people were in the streets by this time hunting down the worst government gunmen and executioners. The strikes continued. Workers took possession of plantations, mills and factories. In places they elected shop committees.

As the news came over the ticker tapes, the Wall Street

operators deduced what might come next. They could lose their Cuban holdings. In those circles that is a fate worse than death. Where could a new strong man be found in a hurry?

Batista's "Junta" Takes Over

On September 5 a "Revolutionary Junta" under the leadership of one Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar seized power. The Junta represented principally the lower officer caste in the army; but Batista shrewdly involved the leaders of the radical student forces. The Junta appointed five commissioners to form a new government and Batista went to see Sumner Welles.

The students pressed hard for Dr. Ramon Grau San Martin, a member of the commission of five, to be named president. Welles didn't like the university professor, whom Machado had imprisoned on the Isle of Pines. Obviously a leftist egghead.

But the pressure was so great that Batista kicked out Cespedes and named Grau to the job September 10. Washington refused to recognize the new government and recalled Welles. On December 18 Jefferson Caffrey arrived in Havana as "special representative" of President Roosevelt. Apparently some of FDR's famous "charm" had rubbed off on Caffrey. Things began to happen. On January 15, 1934, on Batista's order, Grau resigned.

Batista made Carlos Hevia president. That was only a tactical step aimed at confusing political opposition groups. Hevia lasted exactly two days. On January 18 Batista put in Carlos Mendieta. This was the candidate Washington wanted. In face of protests from the Cuban students at having to swallow this reactionary, Roosevelt recognized the new government January 23. Batista then moved swiftly to smash the protest demonstrations and to arrest the leaders.

Some observers have concluded that this opening stage of Batista's rise to power was nothing but pure chaos. They are wrong. The revolutionary pressure had risen high. Batista gave the appearance of bending with it. He did this until its strength was down and his own base was firm, then he moved against it.

During that period he had demonstrated his ability to control the army in the interests of American capitalism. At the same time, he had shown that he was genuinely popular

among the majority of the professional officer caste and even the ranks of the army—he was a talented demagogue. His replacement of one president after another demonstrated his tactical suppleness and his ability to confuse and break up the civilian political opposition. In Wall Street's balance sheet he was evidently not only willing to play ball but was well qualified. No one else in Cuba came near him as a military politician.

Something else had been proved. The military machine was now so powerful in Cuba, and in such skilled and understanding hands, that it was obviously no longer necessary for American imperialism to use direct intervention. The crude use of marines had become outmoded.

This provided a promising opportunity to prove the sincerity of Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy." The Democratic chief now gave Batista a powerful assist. He granted a concession. To show that American capitalism had reformed and could now be counted on to behave as a big brother who would never again use a club on small children, Roosevelt agreed to a new treaty annulling the hated Platt Amendment. This was signed on May 29, 1934.

The rejoicing at this concession was great in Cuba, but somewhat premature. Batista, the enigmatic maker and unmaker of presidents, was busy polishing up the army, oiling its special privileges, adjusting the placement of henchmen, tuning up his military-political machine.

In 1935 a great strike wave hit Cuba. To push back the workers, Mendieta suspended constitutional law and declared a state of siege in Havana. These acts conferred still more dictatorial power to Batista.

Cuba's new strong man felt so well entrenched that he decided he could afford to stage a normal election. A genuine democratic facade, ending the "provisional" government, would have a lot of advantages. Just before the election Mendieta suddenly resigned. But Batista simply appointed Jose A. Barnet as the fifth provisional president since the fall of Machado.

On January 10, 1936, in what appeared to be a fairly honest election (women voted in Cuba for the first time), Dr. Miguel Mariano Gomez y Arias won a majority. He was sworn in May 20.

But he didn't last long. Gomez tried to trim Batista's power. He dismissed 3,000 government employees who owed their posts to the dictator. That was a move Batista had not

written in his book. Maybe this democracy stuff was going a bit too far after all. He had Gomez impeached. On December 22 the trial began. Within two days the president had been found guilty and removed from office.

A Senate committee told Vice-President Federico Laredo Bru that he was now it. Laredo proved to be a more satisfactory occupant of the president's swivel chair.

Batista's main base of power was the army. So long as that base remained seemingly impregnable, however, and the class struggle was not acute, he sought to clothe his rule in at least the forms of democracy.

In preparation for assuming the presidency himself, he had a constitution drawn up that even recognized the right of the people to revolt against a despotic government. He had already managed to give his brass a "New Deal" shine, achieving this partly by cultivating Roosevelt's friendly patronage and partly by legislation that could be read as quite pro-labor.

An expensive campaign helped give Batista the majority of the votes in the 1940 election. Under his presidency the war boom that ended the depression in the United States also gave Cuba a measure of prosperity and the class struggle became relatively quiescent.

In the 1944 elections, Batista decided to run a puppet, Carlos Saladrigas. The opposition ran Grau San Martin. The Cubans took the election seriously and Grau won by a landslide. He took office October 10 amid celebrations from one end of the island to the other. The hope was that Grau would now convert the forms of democracy into genuine substance. Batista's departure to live in Florida seemed to make this hope even more realistic.

Grau did do a few startling things such as seizing the American-owned Havana Electric Railway; but his regime quickly settled down to the main preoccupation of bourgeois politicians in Cuba — self-enrichment. Fraud and corruption flourished as before.

The sinister army, too, remained as before. Grau dismissed some of the most notorious Batista supporters among the officer caste but he altered nothing essential. As the decisive means of rule, the military machine remained intact.

Caribbean McCarthyism

Upon the outbreak of the cold war in 1946 and the launching of the witch hunt shortly thereafter in the

United States, Grau veered from "New Dealism" to "anti-Communism." In 1947, the same year that Truman decreed the infamous "Loyalty Oath," the Cuban president appointed Carlos Prio Socarras as Minister of Labor. Prio initiated repressive measures against the Communist party and then in 1948 campaigned for the presidency on an "anti-Communist" platform. His victory on such a platform was ominous for the future of Cuban politics. Even more ominous was the victory of Batista as a senator although he still lived in Florida.

Truman's "anti-Communism" paved the way in the United States for the rise to prominence of the fascist-minded Senator McCarthy and the worst wave of witch-hunting in the history of the country. In Cuba the "anti-Communism" of Prio Socarras paved the way for Batista's return to power and a regime worse than anything yet seen.

Batista was running as a poor third in the presidential elections in 1952. When polls indicated that Ignacio Agramonte of the Ortodoxo party was quite certain to win on election day June 1, Batista moved. He got together the key officers in the army. With their support he announced March 10 that he had taken power in order to forestall a coup d'etat by Prio Socarras.

The incumbent president took refuge in the Mexican Embassy as Batista declared over the radio, "I have been forced to carry out this coup because of my love for the people." Besides this love, he said he also had in mind "to save the country from chaotic conditions which endangered lives and property." He suspended all constitutional guarantees and canceled the June elections, thus making himself absolute dictator. At the same time he announced that if the United States were attacked by or involved in a war with the Soviet Union, Washington could count on his support. He also promised, naturally, to protect American investments. In a couple of weeks, March 27 to be exact, he received U.S. recognition and on April 3 he broke off diplomatic relations with the USSR.

Thus began the bloodiest chapter in Cuba's unhappy history. The total number of victims in the next seven years is estimated at around 20,000.

But business, especially American business, never had it so good in Cuba. Batista, in addition, initiated the most ambitious construction program in all Latin America, including highways, tunnels, office buildings, apartment houses, hospitals and orphanages.

"Havana was the chief beneficiary of this face lifting," writes Dickey Chapelle. "But two out of three Cubans live in small towns or as squatters beside sugar and coffee plantations. The outpouring of capital and cement did not reach their earth-floored huts. They still ate less than their stomachs craved, their roads remained potholed and flooded, their school buildings jerry-built or in disrepair, their hospitals only paper promises.

"Soon it became commonly accepted that at least one dollar out of every five spent in the country's building boom was lining the personal pocket of a Batista henchman. The dictator himself piled up a fortune estimated at 300 million dollars. A minister of the treasury, debt-ridden when he took office, became a multimillionaire in a matter of weeks. Hundreds of other fortunes — large and small — were made as the government steadily robbed the people. (One senator, Rolando Masferrer, maintained a private army of more than 1000 men.)"

Robert Taber cites an authoritative estimate that out of a public-works budget of \$800 million, the graft came close to \$500 million.

How the Wall Street financiers made out in this rain of dollars is indicated by Carleton Beals in a recent issue of Liberation:

"In 1957, immediately after the brutal murder of one of the finest men in Cuban public life, Pelayo Cuervo (on orders of Detective Chief Orlando Piedra after personal consultation with Batista). Ambassador Arthur Gardner, accompanied by American Embassy economic advisers and officials of the Cuban Telephone Company (subsidiary of I.T. & T.) entered the National Palace, which was still stained with the blood of unsuccessful revolt, to sign a new contract raising telephone rates. According to documents found in the office of Edmund Chester, Batista's public relations adviser, this arrangement was achieved by the persuasive outlay of three million dollars. Our latest ambassador, Philip W. Bonsal, was for years a top official of this same telephone company."

Little was overlooked that might serve to line a pocket with pesos. According to an authoritative Cuban estimate in 1958, nearly 27,000 persons lived on the take from gambling, and 11,500 on prostitution. Havana swarmed with American tourists attracted by the daiquiris, the gambling casinos and lurid burlesque shows. Ten thousand slot machines were under the personal control of Batista's brother-in-law. In similar fashion Havana's parking meters were operated by the family of the mayor.

Batista could maintain himself in power only by the most brutal force. To supplement the army and the police, he shaped his secret service (SIM) along the lines of Hitler's Gestapo. As under Machado, sadistic murderers

were recruited from the underworld to serve as professional butchers in uniform. Political opposition was met with the submachine gun. Virtually every police station had its torture room.

"On my desk before me are two signed statements documenting the terrorism," writes Dickey Chapelle. "One is from a 50-year-old schoolteacher, mother of three children. The Havana police thought she knew where rebel arms were hidden. They arrested her in the middle of the night, and she tells how she was violated with a soldering iron in Havana's XII District police station on February 24, 1958. A physician's certificate confirms her assertion."

This instance was not exceptional. The police often gouged out eyes and castrated their victims before bashing in their heads. The bodies were commonly thrown in the streets or dumped in wells. Dickey Chapelle reports a typical experience:

"One rebel told me he had searched for the remains of his father among 92 bodies piled at a Havana street intersection one morning. 'He was one of the last I looked at,' he finished."

Ruby Hart Phillips, Havana correspondent of the New York Times, reports a case in her book "Cuba, Island of Paradox," which vividly indicates what Batista's henchmen were like. Nine Cuban youths had taken political asylum in the Haitian Embassy where, according to international law, they could not be touched. While the Haitian ambassador was out to lunch, General Salas Canizares, Chief of the National Police, raided the embassy and shot down all the young political exiles. One of them, dying, managed to draw a pistol and shoot the police chief in the lower abdomen. Cuba's head cop was taken to the hospital.

"Ernestina Otero rushed out to Camp Columbia Hospital where she knew the General would be taken," continues Mrs. Phillips. Ernestina was ordered out. "But instead of leaving, she slipped into a small room adjacent to another operating room. Then she heard the siren of an ambulance. There was a window in the little room which permitted her to look into the operating room. It was the type of glass through which one can see without being seen from the other side. She watched as two boys were brought in, still alive, although riddled with bullets. They were dumped onto the operating tables like bags of flour. One lifted his head, stared around, then dropped back. The other was moving his lips. He lifted his hand and let it fall back. An officer came in. He consulted with one of the orderlies 'Get a doctor for them,' he said. Just then Captain Moryon, an aide of Colonel Salas Canizares,

burst in. He looked at the two wounded men, then shouted, 'Never mind the doctor.' He grabbed a knife from a table covered with instruments and cut the throats of both boys. Ernestina said she would never forget the scene."

The July 26 Movement

Americans acquainted to the least degree with the history of their own country should have no difficulty understanding why the Cuban people revolted against the Batista dictatorship. The rebel spirit that animated the Boston Tea Party, the encampment at Valley Forge, the type of fighting seen at Concord and Lexington, inspired comparable actions in Cuba of the 1950's.

The Cuban revolutionaries felt kinship to the rebels of 1775-83 but their immediate models were their own countrymen who opened the struggle for independence from Spain in 1868 and carried it on for thirty years. Today's revolutionaries felt themselves to be the direct heirs of this cause, among other reasons because Batista was not just a Cuban dictator but the representative of a new foreign oppressor — the United States. This may sound strange to Americans who have not studied the role of our country in Cuba; but it happens to be the fact.

In the early Cuban independence fighters, the revolutionaries of the 1950's found worthy models. Men like Jose Marti were not just nationalists in the narrow sense of the word but partisans of the great ideas of freedom and equality that inspired the American and French revolutions.

The young men and women who finally succeeded in toppling Batista provided new examples of self-sacrifice, singleness of purpose, energy and heroism which the youth of the world might well study as they consider taking up the great causes that move humanity forward, such as socialism.

The first important action following Batista's seizure of power was a raid organized by Fidel Castro on the Moncada fortress at Santiago on July 26, 1953. It was something like John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. The American abolitionist hoped that his action would serve as a spark to set off a slave rebellion. The Cuban rebel counted on a comparable response. The immediate consequences for the revolutionaries were similarly tragic. The young Fidel (he was not yet 27) escaped death only by sheer accident. Those in his small band of less than 200 who

did not lose their lives in the attack were hunted down and implacably slaughtered, some after revolting torture. A few managed to escape but Castro and other main leaders were sentenced to long terms in the penitentiary on the Isle of Pines, Castro being condemned to 15 years.

In a certain sense John Brown succeeded in his raid even though he was hanged. He became an inspiration to the Northern haters of slavery and, as the battle hymn declares, his soul went marching on. The Moncada raid had a similar fate in Cuba; it served to inspire the rebel youth. When Fidel Castro and his comrades were released under an amnesty granted to political prisoners in 1955, Havana's radical-minded students already hailed them as national heroes.

Under the title of its closing words, "History will absolve me!" Castro's five-hour address to the court in his own self-defense, October 6, 1953, became one of the most important documents in the movement that finally overthrew Batista. To this day it is well worth studying as an indictment of Batista's tyranny and as a passionate defense of the right of a people to revolt against oppression.

On the legal side, the youthful lawyer based his case on the constitution of 1940, which recognizes the right of revolt. Under the same constitution, and the penal Code of Social Defense, Batista's seizure of power was clearly illegal and subject to heavy punishment.

Proceeding along these lines to accuse Batista and thus turn the defense of the Moncada action into a prosecution of the criminal regime, Castro appealed to the revolutionary will of the people as the final authority in questions of government. This was true, he pointed out, even in ancient times and in the middle ages. Most of his examples, of course, were taken from modern history. "It is well known that in England during the eighteenth century two kings, Charles I and James II, were dethroned for despotism. These acts coincided with the birth of liberal political philosophy and provided the ideological foundation for a new social class, which was then struggling to break the bonds of feudalism."

John Milton, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Paine, the Declaration of Independence, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man were among the authorities cited by Castro to prove that "the right to rebellion is at the very roots of Cuba's existence as a nation."

As can be seen, Castro's legal defense did not interfere with his use of the trial to present his political views. He and his comrades were performing their duty as citizens, he said. "We are Cubans and to be Cuban implies a duty. Not to fulfill that duty is a crime, is treason."

"We are proud of the history of our country," Castro continued. "We learned history in school and we have grown up hearing of liberty, justice and human rights."

"We were taught to venerate the glorious example of our heroes and our martyrs. Cespedes, Agramonte, Maceo, Gomez and Marti were the first names engraved in our minds. We were taught that the titan Maceo had said that liberty is not begged but is won with the blade of a machete."

"We were taught that for the guidance of Cuba's free citizens the Apostle [Jose Marti] wrote in his 'Book of Gold':

"The man who conforms by obeying unjust laws and permits anybody to trample the country in which he was born, the man who so mistreats his country, is not an honorable man."

"In the world there must be a certain degree of decorum just as there must be a certain amount of light. When there are many men without decorum, there are always others who bear in themselves the dignity of many men. These are the men who rebel with great force against those who steal the people's freedom — that is to say, against those who steal human dignity itself."

Perhaps the most eloquent section of Castro's speech before the court was his defense of the martyrs who fell in the Moncada assault. Castro is not the flowery type of orator; his eloquence resides in the marshalling of facts and explanations. In front of the judges assigned to condemn him, he described the financial sacrifices these young people had made to buy guns, the risks they had accepted to carry out the assault, and the heroism with which they laid down their lives in the cause of freedom and justice. In stark contrast to this he described the corruption, foulness and barbarous acts of Batista and his butchers. It was an account that could not but stir the youth of Cuba — and youth everywhere.

Castro explained exactly what the attack on the fortress sought to accomplish, exactly how it was organized, who the leaders were and how they intended to proclaim their aims over the radio station that was listed for capture. Today greatest interest attaches to the program he outlined. It included much more than "restoration of public liberties and political democracy."

It advocated granting land to the smallholders, making the property "not mortgageable and not transferable." For

the workers Castro proposed "the right to share 30% of the profits of all the large industrial, mercantile and mining enterprises, including the sugar mills." A new revolutionary government would order "the confiscation of all holdings and ill-gotten gains of those who had committed frauds during previous regimes, as well as the holdings and ill-gotten gains of all their legatees and heirs." To implement this, special courts would be given full powers to look into the records of all corporations.

In addition another series of laws would be promulgated such as "the Agrarian Reform, Integral Reform of Education, nationalization of the Utilities Trust and the Telephone Trust, refund to the people of the illegal excessive rates this company has charged, and payment to the Treasury of all taxes brazenly evaded in the past."

Six Main Problems

The rebel leader outlined in some detail from the prisoner's docket what he considered to be Cuba's six main problems: Land, industrialization, housing, unemployment, education, and health. Here is a section of his speech that will indicate how he proposed to solve these:

"It is not by statesmen such as Carlos Saladrigas [Bastista's nominee for the presidency in 1944], whose statesmanship consists of preserving the status quo and mouthing phrases like the 'absolute freedom of enterprise,' 'guarantees to investment capital' and 'the law of supply and demand,' that we will solve these problems. . . . In this present-day world, social problems are not solved by spontaneous generation.

"A revolutionary government with the backing of the people and the respect of the nation, after cleaning the various institutions of all venal and corrupt officials, would proceed immediately to industrialize the country, mobilizing all inactive capital, currently estimated at about 1500 million dollars, through the National Bank and the Agricultural, Industrial and Development Bank, and submitting this mammoth task to experts and men of absolute competence, completely removed from all political machinations, for study, direction, planning and realization.

"After settling the one hundred thousand small farmers as owners on land which they previously rented, a revolutionary government would proceed immediately to settle the land problem. First, as the Constitution orders we would establish the maximum amount of land to be held by each type of agricultural enterprise and would acquire the excess acres by: expropriation, recovery of the lands stolen from the State, improvement of swampland, planting of large

nurseries and reserving zones for reforestation. Secondly, we would distribute the remaining land among peasant families with priority given to the larger ones, and would promote agricultural co-operatives with a single technical, professional direction in farming and cattle raising. Finally, we would provide resources, equipment, protection and useful guidance to the peasants.

"A revolutionary government would solve the housing problem by cutting all rents in half, by providing tax exemptions on homes inhabited by the owners; by tripling taxes on rented homes; by tearing down hovels and replacing them with modern multiple-dwelling buildings; and by financing housing all over the island on a scale heretofore unheard of; with the criterion that, just as each rural family should possess its own tract of land, each city family should own its home or apartment. There is plenty of building material and more than enough manpower to make a decent home for every Cuban. . . . On the other hand, today there are greater than ever possibilities of bringing electricity to the remotest corner of the island. The use of nuclear energy in this field is now a reality and will greatly reduce the cost of producing electricity.

"With these three projects and reforms, the problem of unemployment would automatically disappear and the work to improve public health and to fight against disease would be made much less difficult.

"Finally, a revolutionary government would undertake the integral reform of the educational system, bringing it in line with the foregoing projects with the idea of educating those generations who will have the privilege of living in a happy land. . . .

"Where will the money be found for all this? When there is an end to rife embezzlement of government funds, when public officials stop taking graft from the large companies who owe taxes to the State, when the enormous resources of the country are brought into full use, when we no longer buy tanks, bombers and guns for this country (which has no frontiers to defend and where these instruments of war, now being purchased are used against the people), when there is more interest in educating the people than in killing them — then there will be more than enough money.

"Cuba could easily provide for a population three times as great as it now has, so there is no excuse for the abject poverty of a single one of its present inhabitants. The markets should be overflowing with produce, pantries should be full, all hands should be working. This is not an inconceivable thought. What is inconceivable is that anyone should go to bed hungry, that children should die for lack of medical attention; what is inconceivable is that 30% of our farm people cannot write their names and that 99% of them know nothing of Cuba's history. What is inconceivable is that the majority of our rural people are now living in worse circumstances than were the Indians Columbus discovered living in the fairest land that human eyes had ever seen.

"To those who would call me a dreamer, I quote the words

of Marti: A true man does not seek the path where advantage lies, but rather, the path where duty lies, and this is the only practical man, whose dream of today will be the law of tomorrow, because he who has looked back on the upheavals of history and has seen civilizations going up in flames, crying out in bloody struggle, throughout the centuries, knows that the future well-being of man, without exception, lies on the side of duty."

By 1954 Batista appeared impregnable. His army, equipped with the latest American weapons and advised by an American military mission, held the island's political life in a tight net. Police terror kept the meshes of the net in good repair. Business was booming and the dictator enjoyed the full support of Wall Street and the State Department. It appeared a propitious time to add some democratic camouflage. A presidential election, held November 1, was won handily by Batista after the sole token oppositional candidate, Dr. Ramon Grau San Martin withdrew in despair and disgust.

In another step calculated to lower dissatisfaction with his rule, Batista granted a concession after being sworn in as president. On May 13, 1955, he signed a bill providing a general amnesty of political prisoners.

Castro had been approached in prison with an offer of freedom in return for modifying his opposition to the dictatorship. He refused such a deal, however; and, upon arriving in Havana May 17, resumed his political attacks on the regime.

But Castro found the avenues for democratic expression so meager as to be of little consequence. He decided to go into exile in Mexico in order better to organize an underground struggle.

Learn Guerrilla Warfare

How serious Castro was in this aim can be gathered from the fact that one of his first efforts was directed at overcoming a weakness which he and his followers felt keenly — their lack of military training. Castro succeeded in persuading Colonel Alberto Bayo to give a select group of cadres theoretical and practical training in guerrilla warfare. Bayo was well-known in Latin America as an expert in this field, having served in the Spanish forces that fought Abd El Krim in Morocco. The colonel became an admirer of the Moroccan guerrilla fighters and made a study of their tactics, which he sought, unsuccessfully, to place at the

disposal of the Republican government of Spain in the civil war against Franco.

Castro himself participated only to a limited degree in this training. As the main political organizer, he spent the greater part of his time among refugee circles in Miami, Key West, Tampa and New York in search of funds and recruits.

Cuban refugee circles were divided at the time into many groups and tendencies. Castro was a member of the bourgeois-democratic Ortodoxo party, but soon found himself embroiled with the leadership over what to him was the key question — the necessity for serious preparation and active organization of the armed overthrow of the Batista dictatorship. Finally on March 19, 1956, disillusioned with the vacillations and compromises of the Ortodoxo chieftains on this issue, he announced the formation of the July 26 Movement as an independent revolutionary organization.

The most noteworthy feature of this political formation in the following years was its consistent refusal to compromise on the basic platform on which it stood — active organization of a popular uprising against Batista. Several attempts were made by leaders of the Autentico and Ortodoxo parties to get Castro to subordinate his aims to a common front in which they would have decisive voice. In each case he refused although he at the same time sought united action, particularly if it would facilitate getting material aid for the rebel forces in Cuba.

The year 1956 marked a significant turning point in Cuban politics. On April 4 a conspiracy between the "Monte Cristi" group and some lower officers in the army headed by Colonel Ramon Barquin, was discovered. The officers were courtmartialed and sentenced to the Isle of Pines. The conspiracy was of symptomatic importance, revealing that a section of the officer caste were uneasy over the unpopularity of Batista and thinking of finding a more acceptable figure.

On April 29 a small group attempted, in emulation of Castro's Moncada raid, to seize the Goicuria army fortress at Matanzas. The attempt was smashed.

Apparently Castro judged that such actions indicated a rise in revolutionary sentiment in Cuba. On November 15 he announced his intention to invade the island as the first step in leading a popular insurrection.

The story of his landing is now well known. On a small

yacht, the "Granma," capable of holding a couple of dozen men, Castro set out from Mexico with a force of eighty-two and all the arms and ammunition that could be put on board. An uprising in Santiago was timed for November 30 to divert attention from the landing. The uprising went through on schedule and was put down. But due to bad weather and engine trouble, the "Granma" was delayed until December 2 and the landing was made at an unfavorable swampy spot where the arms could not easily be unloaded.

Batista learned of the landing the same day that it was made and by December 5 the small "invasion" force was surrounded. They suffered a heavy defeat, only twelve men managing to evade the attackers and eventually assemble in a safe place in the Sierra Maestras. Batista claimed, and apparently believed, that Castro had been killed. For a time it was difficult to obtain evidence to the contrary. Nevertheless, this small band of twelve was to swell in less than two years to an army powerful enough to defeat Batista's well-trained and well-equipped forces and topple the dictatorship.

The leaders of the July 26 Movement ascribe their final success principally to their tactics. It must be noted, however, that the best of tactics are of little avail in the absence of favorable social and political conditions. These were quite ripe for revolution as can be judged from the fact that on July 31, 1957, a spontaneous general strike occurred in Santiago and spread swiftly throughout the country.

It should be noted, too, that in the political atmosphere generated under Batista another leadership, much like the July 26 Movement in composition and coloration, had formed in Havana. This was the Directorio Revolucionario, a group centered among the university students. Under Jose Antonio Echevarria, the Directorio staged a raid on the Presidential Palace March 13, 1957 in an attempt to assassinate Batista. This terroristic action, heroic as it was, proved crippling; some of the best leaders of the group, including Echevarria, were killed and Batista only received a bad scare.

Appeal to Campesinos

As a major tactic, the July 26 Movement sought a base in the Cuban peasantry. Its main appeals were directed to the countryside where it hoped to recruit its fighting

forces. The leading slogan was land to the campesinos.

Setting up what was in effect a dual government in the Sierra Maestras, Castro sought to give an example to the farmers, sharecroppers and field workers of what they could expect from the July 26 Movement in contrast to Batista's regime in Havana. The example was quite convincing, for the July 26 Movement was a spartan organization that sought to live according to what it taught. The campesinos began to support it actively and then to join its guerrilla forces in increasing numbers. By the summer of 1958 the point of qualitative change was reached — the guerrilla bands became large enough to operate as an army in the field.

Batista, like Chiang Kai-shek, sought to crush the guerrillas by an ambitious military drive. Like Chiang's troops, however, the ranks of Batista's army proved receptive to revolutionary appeals and began to join the rebels. Finally, like the Chinese revolutionary leaders, the Cubans launched a counterattack that brought them to power.

On the political side, Castro sought from the beginning to speak for Cuba as a whole. His principal appeal was to end Batista's bloody, dictatorial rule and put a government responsible to the people in power. He received some support from individuals in bourgeois circles but it is worth observing that the class as a whole did not rally to his banner. The most powerful ones stuck with Batista. When the dictatorship was collapsing, a "junta" of generals was set up that evidently enjoyed the backing of these interests. They sought to negotiate with Castro, but he refused to deal with them. Having learned from the experience of the Guatemalan revolution that failure to break up the old army is a fatal error, Castro did not intend to walk into that trap. Out of tactical considerations he took the far-reaching measure, upon reaching Havana, of breaking up both Batista's army and Batista's police.

Not even the middle class in the cities appears to have been enthusiastic over Castro's July 26 Movement. The upper petty-bourgeois layers that opposed Batista, including businessmen and manufacturers, tended to support the Autentico or Ortodoxo parties and a clandestine organization, the "Civil Resistance Movement," which included professors, teachers and white-collar workers in its ranks. This underground action group, centered principally in Havana, had three sections, propaganda, fund-raising and supplies. The sections were divided into cells of ten persons, each of

whom sought to enlist another ten persons to form a new cell. By the beginning of 1958, as the July 26 Movement grew in weight, the Civic Resistance Movement began to note a sharp rise in financial contributions. In January these were \$7,000; in March \$20,000.

As for the working class, it was caught without an effective political leadership of its own. The trade unions were dominated by venal officials holding their posts through Batista's favor. The Communist party was discredited because of its support to Batista in the past. Moreover it had no independent policy. Like the Communist party in the United States, its main concern was to advance the Kremlin's foreign policy of maintaining the status quo. Consequently the Cuban workers tended to favor the July 26 Movement and to support it actively insofar as they could without a dynamic leadership and fighting organizations of their own.

"But the Papers Say . . ."

If words could destroy, a single day's production of "hate Cuba" language in the American capitalist press would suffice to make Havana look like Hiroshima on the evening of August 6, 1945.

Even the staid newspapers, those that believe a public image of dignity pays off best, are at the firing line, bucket in one hand, filth in the other. Here, for instance, is a sampling of loaded words from a single article by Tad Szulc, special correspondent of the New York Times, dated from Camaguey, June 20:

"Doubt about the eventual outcome of Cuba's social revolution is becoming manifest in the island's rich provinces . . ."

" . . . shrinking ranks of those still unquestioningly supporting the Castro regime . . ."

" . . . the revolutionary program is at best in very serious difficulties and at worst in danger of possible disintegration . . ."

" . . . the picture is one of mismanagement, economic deterioration and declining social standards . . ."

" . . . the situation now developing in the provinces appears to be breeding palpable discontent and fear for the future, although it has not yet taken the shape of open opposition . . ."

What are the facts?

The Castro regime is without the slightest doubt the most popular government Cuba has ever enjoyed.

To anyone with an open mind who cares to take the \$10 flight from Florida to Havana to see for himself, the contrast between the propaganda in the American capitalist press and the real attitude of the Cuban people could not be more startling.

But we needn't rely on personal impressions, which may be colored or one-sided. Facts are available that speak so emphatically about the popular attitude that even the most ardent backers of the Batista dictatorship find them difficult to deny.

What the Polls Show

On June 26, 1960, the Cuban magazine Bohemia published a nationwide poll. The rating of the government can be judged from the following: 81.17% of the population considered everything the government was doing "perfect"; 12.14% thought it was doing well, with qualifications ranging from "few exceptions" to "both good and bad"; 0.48% thought it was bad with "few exceptions"; 0.17% considered it "extremely bad"; 0.96% answered "don't know"; and 5.08% said they didn't care to answer.

Those were the figures for the country as a whole. In the rural areas the response was even more impressive: 89.67% answered "perfect"; 6.61% had some qualifications; 0.14% considered it "extremely bad"; 1.65% didn't know; and 1.93% didn't care to answer.

The poll included dozens of questions designed to explore attitudes toward all the many fields of activity in which the government is engaged, from the agrarian reform to international relations. These made it possible to get an accurate picture of shifts in sentiment since the previous poll a year earlier. Here are the conclusions drawn by Bohemia:

"(1) The Revolutionary Government continues to enjoy the support of public opinion to a degree unequaled by any other government in our memory.

"(2) This support has suffered in the year since our last survey only a slight decline of 2%. This decline has been compensated by a slight increase in the intensity of support.

"(3) The source of the decline is in the upper and middle class. And this is compensated by an increase in the working class.

"(4) The highly favorable opinion of the Revolutionary Government is due principally to the measures and actions undertaken by the Revolutionary Government in defense of the popular economy.

"(5) Economic motives continue to constitute for our people the fundamental forces that shape their opinions."

Bohemia's survey was confirmed by another one under American auspices published August 1. This survey, based on 1,000 interviews in Havana and other cities and therefore reflecting urban sentiment, was made in May under the direction of the Institute for International Social Research, of Princeton, N. J., headed by Dr. Lloyd A. Free.

"If this report is at all accurate," Peter Edson was forced to admit in the rabidly anti-Castro New York World-Telegram, "it should dispel any hopes that the Castro regime is about to be overthrown."

"Eighty-six percent of the Cuban people support Fidel Castro's revolutionary government, finding conditions now better than they were under the Batista regime overthrown in 1959. Eight percent rate the Castro regime worse than Batista's. Three percent believe the two about equal. And 3 percent refuse to express an opinion."

Like the Bohemia survey, the Princeton sampling indicated the class division over the new government. Edson noted:

"The eight to 11 percent of the Cubans who oppose the Castro regime . . . are made up largely of the older, better educated, middle and upper-income-bracket groups. Eighty percent of Castro's opposition is concentrated in the Havana area. In rural Cuba, Castro is supreme . . .

"Half of the 86 percent believing conditions in Cuba today are better than they were under Batista are classified as 'fervent' Castro supporters. The other half are 'moderate' supporters . . ."

Only three out of ten expressed any disapproval of the Castro government. Of this minority, 25% mentioned "lack of freedom"; 18% "intervention with private property and private enterprise"; 9% "bad foreign policy"; 9% "lack of democracy and failure to hold elections."

Reasons listed for satisfaction with the Castro government included the following:

"Approval of its agrarian reform program, 26 percent. Educational reform and campaign against illiteracy, 18 percent. Social justice and concern for workers, farmers and the poor, 17 percent. Economic progress and concern over unemployment, 8 percent. Inculcation of nationalism and patriotism among the people, 6 percent. Safety of the individual with an end to killing and physical abuses by the police, 6 percent."

The statistics speak for themselves. They register overwhelming approval of the sweeping measures taken since the revolution toppled the Batista dictatorship.

If these measures are borne in mind it is not difficult to understand why enthusiasm is so high. Under Batista Cuba was like a concentration camp. Today the fortresses that housed the dictator's murderous armed forces have been torn down or converted into schools. To most Cubans, this change alone symbolizes what the revolution has accomplished.

But that was only the beginning. For the ordinary person, economic conditions in Cuba in Batista's time were like those of the great depression of the thirties in the USA. As the first installment on their promises, the revolutionary leaders slashed rents, lowered essential food costs, raised starvation wages and began tackling the unemployment problem.

Then came the agrarian reform. This recovered the fertile land that had been fenced in by giant American corporations and feudal-minded Cuban landholders. Land is now being parcelled out to family farmers. The government at the same time initiated a co-operative movement that holds great promise. Cuba's basic labor force, the sugar workers, saw a new future opening up—an indescribably bright future, if it is recalled that under Batista normal unemployment lasted eight to nine months a year.

As America's corporate interests sought to counter such progressive measures by savage economic and political attacks, the Cuban government responded by taking control of many of their holdings. "Intervention," the establishment of control, was followed quite frequently by nationalization. Each time this occurred on a dramatic scale as in the case of the oil refineries, the island echoed with shouts of approval.

Intervention and nationalization have gone so far that all of Cuba's major industries, including the key plantations and sugar mills are now in government hands. Wall Street investments, rated as high as \$1 billion among the stock gamblers and their Democratic and Republican spokesmen in government, have reverted to the Cuban people. At this writing, the only major property still held by Wall Street is in Cuba's rich mineral resources. These, however, appear marked for early nationalization.

The beginnings of planned economy were established in

the fall of 1959 during a series of great public demonstrations of approval. The beginnings proved successful. Planned economy—the first in the Western Hemisphere!—is now destined to rapid growth in Cuba.

Even if the Cubans find themselves compelled to make quite a few sacrifices because of the terrible pressures that the American monopolists can exert, they have already demonstrated that they will respond with the greatest determination and heroism.

They have begun to win their way out of the prison of capitalism and, as the polls show, they see no reason for returning.

The Fear of "Communism"

It is difficult to find an article about the Cuban revolution or even a dispatch from Havana nowadays in the capitalist press that does not include wringing of the hands or frothing at the mouth over the "advance of communism" under the Castro government. In Cuba, on the other hand, most of the people you talk with indignantly dismiss the charge as slander.

Is all that smoke in the press about "communism" just a Wall Street smudge or is there, perhaps, some fire behind it? To answer this question, we had best begin by attempting to discover what is meant by "communism."

To some capitalists, and they happen to be among the most powerful, any public measure that puts limits to "free enterprise" signifies "communism." They consider it "communism," for instance, to prevent them from plundering our natural resources, or from raiding the public treasury. A lot of Wall Street's clamor about what is going on in Cuba refers to restrictions of this type.

Among many radicals and even socialists, the term "communism" refers to something quite different—it means the antidemocratic practices, including one-party slates, blood purges, frame-up trials and similar manifestations of dictatorial rule that have occurred in the Soviet Union under Stalin and his heirs.

This is also pretty much the popular view. When ordinary people today express fear of "communism," what they think of is the lack of democracy and civil liberties in the Soviet bloc countries. They say quite rightly, "We don't want concentration camps in America or the cult of an individual like Stalin." Thus they find it depressing to

hear about Cuba going "communist." Why would the Cubans want a regime like Stalin's?

Among Marxists, "communism" has still other meanings. First of all, it is the name of the society toward which all countries are clearly evolving, a society of complete freedom based on a co-operative, planned world economy that has achieved unlimited abundance and thereby brought the painful class differences, the wars and depressions and hatreds of our time to an end. Secondly, it is the name of the international political movement organized under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky in 1919 to fight for and hasten the inauguration of this abundant communist society of the future.

In the early twenties and even into the thirties this was the splendid meaning of the word "communism" and that was the way most people thought of it, even opponents — when they considered it honestly.

Clearly enough, the Stalinist displacement of Leninism brought "communism" into evil repute, converting the word in the popular mind into the opposite of its real meaning and offering reactionaries an invaluable propaganda advantage. But all this is another story. For our present purpose we need consider only two possibilities that people think of when they ask about Cuba going "communist": (1) inroads on capitalist property relations; (2) a shift in government that would give power to Stalinism. The two possibilities are not at all synonymous or dependent on each other.

Most workers and farmers tend to favor inroads on capitalism. So let us consider the second possibility as the one of real concern. Is there anything in the record of the Cuban Communist party (it has called itself the "Popular Socialist Party" since 1944) to indicate that it might seek power in opposition to the July 26 Movement which led the revolution against Batista?

The communist movement, as Lenin and Trotsky conceived it, began in Cuba in the early twenties in Oriente, the traditional revolutionary center. Outlawed by dictator Machado in 1925, the party fought in the underground. But with the rise of Stalinism, the Cuban Communist party, like its sister parties throughout the world, was converted from an expression of Cuban revolutionary protest into an agency of Soviet foreign policy. With the fall of Machado, it engaged in wild ultra-leftist adventures typical of the

"Third Period" of Stalinism. (In the United States, by way of parallel, Franklin D. Roosevelt was labeled a "fascist.")

After Hitler walked into power in Germany, without a fight from either the Communist party or the Social Democracy, Stalin shifted to a tactic of the most cynical class collaboration with what he called the "peace-loving" powers. Class collaboration, scored since the time of Marx and Engels as betrayal of the interests of the working class, was given new packaging and labelled the "popular front."

Stalin began to make this turn about the time Roosevelt recognized the Soviet Union in 1933. One of the services which Stalin offered Roosevelt in the negotiations leading up to recognition was help in stemming revolutionary unrest in Cuba. That was how the Militant analyzed it as can be seen from an editorial printed November 25, 1933:

"Cuba may very well turn out to be the Achilles' heel of the Wall Street monster. The contradictions between its domination by U.S. imperialism and the life interests of the masses are at the explosive point there. For many weeks now the struggle has been blazing into a conflagration which the whole world could see. The workers on their own initiative have been taking possession of American properties and have even, in some instances, proceeded to the formation of local Soviets.

"The island is small, but the uprising of its people has an enormous strategic importance and moral power. The Wall Street bandits justly regard it with apprehension as the peoples of Latin America and the conscious workers in the U.S. look to it with sympathy and hope. The U.S. bandits stand ready to crush the revolt with the brutal force of armed intervention. The workers and the peoples ought to be shown the way to unify all their efforts with those of the Cuban workers for the frustration of these designs. . . .

"In the present instance, filled with such great potentialities, the Comintern of Stalin remains as silent as the grave. And as for Stalin himself, the 'best disciple of Lenin,' his mouth, as the saying goes, might be filled with water — he cannot utter a word of advice, encouragement or hope on the grandiose events in Cuba.

"Is this 'nonintervention' in the Cuban revolution a deliberate policy? Was an **express promise** to keep 'Hands off Cuba' a part of the Washington agreement for recognition? If not, please explain the precise meaning of the following clause in Litvinoff's letter:

"(4) Not to permit the formation or residence on its territory of any organization or group — and to prevent the activity on its territory of any organization or group — which has as an aim the overthrow of, or bringing about by force of a change in, the political or social order of the whole or

any part of the United States, its territories or possessions.

"This treacherous pledge, which brings the blush of shame to every revolutionist, does not refer to some territory on the moon. It refers, directly and concretely, and at the present moment, to Cuba.

"In our opinion, and we say it with blunt and brutal frankness, it was explicitly so discussed and understood in the negotiations. . . ."

The "Popular Front" in Action

Batista's rule was so bloody, as the Cuban dictator aped some of the practices of Mussolini and Hitler, that it was not easy for the leaders of the Communist party to overcome the revolutionary sentiments of the rank and file and get them to support the dictatorship. But by 1938, the party was following Stalin's "popular front" line as assiduously as its American counterpart which was now, under Browder's guidance, helping to spread the cult of "FDR." In August of 1938 the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist party openly resolved "to take a more positive stand towards Colonel Batista since he has ceased to be the center of reaction and now professes democracy."

Batista reciprocated by immediately legalizing the Communist party. Blas Roca, general secretary of the party, explained the Cuban "popular front" on a visit to New York: "It must be remembered that Colonel Batista himself comes of the people. He was a worker, the leader of the greatest democratic movement we've had."

In 1940 the Communist party was conspicuous in the coalition that Batista put together around the slogan, "Batista for president!" On March 6, 1943, the dictator appointed a Communist party leader, Juan Marinello, to his cabinet and on March 14 of the following year, he added another, Carlos Rodriguez.

In the 1944 elections the Communist party supported Saladrigas, a Batista puppet, for the presidency against the opposition candidate Dr. Grau San Martin. When Grau won, the Communist leaders saw that they had made an error in sticking so faithfully to Batista. However, they speedily rectified the error. They ran after the bandwagon of the new president after it was unhitched in the presidential palace. Grau let them climb on the tail board.

With the beginning of the cold war and the opening of the witch-hunt in the United States, the Grau government altered its policies to conform with those of Washington.

Batista had utilized the services of the Communist party principally to keep the trade unions under government control. Grau's Minister of Labor, Carlos Prio Socarras, began a government witch-hunt of "communists" in 1947, the same year that Truman issued his infamous decree requiring a "loyalty" oath of government employees. Prio sought to oust trade-union leaders under Communist party influence and replace them with officials selected from his own Autentico party. In 1948 he ran for the presidency and won on an "anti-Communist" plank. In office he continued the witch-hunt in imitation of Truman.

When Batista seized power again in 1952, he kept up the Cuban emulation of McCarthyism, breaking off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union on April 3, 1952, and outlawing the Communist party on October 31, 1953. However, the Communist party never suffered, even in the worst final years of Batista's murderous rule, as did the July 26 Movement and similar revolutionary-minded groups. In fact, it appeared that Batista had a working arrangement under which the Communist party, in return for a lenient attitude, utilized its positions in the trade unions to block the working class from militant action. The Communist leaders, of course, never supported the July 26 Movement during Batista's terror; in fact, they attacked it.

Today the Cuban Communist party press is sweet as molasses toward the July 26 Movement. Whether the leaders of the "barbudos" find this thick praise very palatable may well be doubted. Certainly it has not served to rehabilitate the Communist party in the eyes of the Cuban people.

We are fairly safe in concluding that a party that could toady up to Stalin and Batista for a quarter of a century is not exactly the kind that will seriously contend for power. That the leaders will seek government posts and special privileges is, of course, to be expected. In that they remain true to their past record.

"Ripe Fruit" for Kremlin?

At a public meeting sponsored by the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New York April 24, Waldo Frank, the well-known liberal who heads the committee, warned that Cuba could meet with a tragic fate like that of the Spanish Republic. A counter-revolutionary movement such as the one headed by Franco might gain headway under foreign

inspiration and succeed in toppling the new government. Analyzing the downfall of the elected Spanish government at the hands of the fascists, Frank recalled that the help received by the republican government from the Soviet Union was delayed and grudging. Arms were shipped only in return for gold, and onerous political strings were attached.

Waldo Frank's main point was to defend Cuba's right as a sovereign nation to deal with other powers as it sees fit despite any dangers, real or alleged. He scored the economic and political pressure placed on Cuba by the State Department and American monopoly interests and demonstrated how hypocritical it was of these forces to denounce the Cuban government for turning in the Soviet direction for help.

Every fair-minded person must certainly agree that the Castro government not only had the right but the duty to seek aid from other countries in face of Wall Street's evident aim of strangling the Cuban revolution. Everyone who really believes in democracy, in equality among nations and the efforts of oppressed colonial peoples to achieve independence will support the new government in the courageous way it has asserted Cuba's sovereignty.

However, Waldo Frank is quite right in indicating that dangers are involved. The parallel with Spanish experience is pertinent. But if the causes of the tragedy in Spain are fully understood there is no reason whatever for Cuba to suffer a similar fate. The leaders of the Cuban revolution have already demonstrated their capacity to avoid the errors that proved fatal in Guatemala; we can expect that they will demonstrate similar capacity to learn from the costly experience of the Spanish revolution.

What assured defeat at the hands of Franco was acceptance of the political strings that Stalin put on aid sent from the Soviet Union. The Spanish revolutionaries were under no obligation whatever to agree to these. In the first place, they had to pay cash on the barrel head for the arms they received. In the second place, to submit to political guidance from the Kremlin meant to betray the political independence of their own movement. Independent political action was of decisive importance to the success of the Spanish revolution; arms from the USSR were not.

Stalin's policy in Spain was to retain capitalist property relations, including Spanish possession of the Moroccan

colony. Thus the Spanish republican forces had no effective appeal that could have disintegrated Franco's forces; and they had no program of basic social change to inspire the Spanish workers and peasants. The final consequence was to assure Franco's victory. This in turn paved the way for World War II and Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. Stalin's policy proved disastrous to the interests of the USSR, not to speak of the interests of socialism on a world scale.

On the surface, the danger of repeating this bleak course appears considerable. Khrushchev's foreign policy is essentially the same as Stalin's; he seeks to maintain the status quo by pawning the interests of revolutionary movements and of small countries in big-power deals. All that Khrushchev has granted Cuba is a trade pact, one that is advantageous to the Soviet Union. He is not giving any handouts. Instead he is obviously seeking political profit in Cuba, Latin America and the rest of the colonial world. Can Khrushchev succeed in Cuba in the unfortunate way Stalin did in Spain?

Important Differences

On close consideration, the possibility of repeating in Cuba what happened in Spain appears remote. The Cuban leaders are different from the Spanish revolutionaries in their tendency to carry things through to the end. Although they began by seeking only an end to Batista's dictatorship, they have proved far bolder in upsetting property relations, under the demands of political necessity, than the Spaniards with all their lip service to socialist and communist ideology. This difference alone can turn out to be decisive.

In addition, they passed a stern test in which the Spaniards failed — they won a civil war. This has placed them in an extremely strong domestic position, for they came to power **after** the civil war with the Cuban Franco, not before. Their resulting strength and confidence are displayed by a dramatic fact — in the face of the threat from Wall Street to smash the revolution, they gave guns to the people, arming the entire population.

Finally, they appear to have realized the importance of widening the base of their defense to all of Latin America instead of confining it to the small island of Cuba. They honestly and frankly recognize their military weakness, their small size, the great difficulties that confront the

Cuban revolution; but they seek to make up for this by utilizing the revolution as an **example** to inspire all of Central and South America.

The international situation is also much more favorable for the Cuban revolution than the Spanish. In 1936 Mussolini, Hitler and the Mikado were riding high, fascism was on the march and the prestige and power of the Soviet Union had reached the ebb marked by Stalin's infamous purges and frame-up trials.

Today the colonial independence movement is sweeping with enormous force, bringing even the most underdeveloped nations of Africa into the stream of world politics. Cuba stands in a fraternity of small powers whose voices resound out of all proportion to their economic and military strength.

World imperialism is far weaker; the British, French, Dutch and Belgian empires are disintegrating. Japan and Germany are occupied countries. In contrast, Eastern Europe and China now stand in the Soviet camp and the Soviet Union itself has **outstripped** the Western European powers and stands second only to the United States.

Besides this, the monolithism of Stalinism has been broken. Moscow can no longer speak without taking into account rejoinders or amendments from Belgrade and Peking which are no doubt carefully studied in Cuba for independent evaluation. And the revolutionary-socialist voice of Trotskyism begins to be heard more frequently as in the student demonstrations in Japan.

With such a relation of forces, the fear that Cuba may fall like a ripe fruit into the hands of Khrushchev does not seem well founded. It is more likely that the Cuban example will prove to be a fresh source of inspiration to the Russian workers in their own struggle to win back the democracy they knew under Lenin and Trotsky.

In Revolutionary Tradition

In observance of France's national holiday commemorating the fall of the Bastille, July 14, 1789, *Revolucion*, the newspaper of Cuba's July 26 Movement, paid high tribute to the great social upheaval that sounded the death knell of European feudalism. A columnist, "El Jacobino," recalled the role of the Jacobins in leading the French Revolution and praised the thorough way in which Desmoulins, Danton and "above all Robespierre, Saint-Just, Hebert and Marat" carried out the historic mission of their epoch.

El Jacobino describes the major stages of the revolution — the popular one in which the feudal rubbish was swept away; and then the stage of reaction:

"With the fall of Robespierre on the ninth of Thermidor (July 27, 1794), the glorious, Jacobin, popular stage of the great French Revolution closes. Power passed into the hands of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, who hastened to elevate to the level of eternal categories the new relations of economic production, forgetting that the feudal regime which had just been overthrown was also convinced of the eternalness of its supremacy and of its despotism over the people."

The Cuban Revolution, in El Jacobino's opinion, is not only analogous to the French Revolution; it is in its tradition:

"If the French Revolution did not resolve all the problems, other revolutions followed in the heritage, such as the victorious revolution of the Negro slaves of Haiti, the Revolution of 1848 in Europe, the Paris Commune. But it fell to the great revolutions of the twentieth century, those in which the proletariat, the peasants, and other national layers played a decisive role, to bring into the life of the peoples the revolutionary principles of the Jacobins of 1792. This is the case with the Cuban Revolution, brilliant inheritor of the first French movement of emancipation."

El Jacobino follows this observation with some thought-provoking remarks on the contrast between the problems of 1789 and those which the Cuban Revolution faces today:

"The mission of the Cuban Revolution is more profound than that of Jacobinism at the end of the eighteenth century. The conditions in which it is developing, in an epoch of general crisis for Yankee imperialism, lessens the possibility of a ninth of Thermidor, the possibility of a victory of the counter-revolution. The Cuban Revolution goes beyond the simple formal equality of citizens before the law, since with the support of the great majority of the people, it is carrying out in depth political and social transformations which will give an intense impulse to new relations of production serving the interests of the nation as a whole. The Cuban Revolution takes on the political and moral characteristics which were the glory of the French Revolution during the Jacobin period: revolutionary audacity, unbreakable firmness in defense of principles, creative energy, incorruptibility, shining faith in the creative forces of the popular masses. The Jacobins of Cuba, the Robespierres, the Marats, the Babeufs of our epoch, sharing with the people strong national roots, face vigorously

the emigres of the new Coblenzes [places where counter-revolutionaries mobilize abroad], the threats and aggressions of American imperialism."

Three great, closely interrelated problems of the Cuban Revolution are indicated in El Jacobino's article: (1) How to defend democracy and extend it. (2) How to avoid a "Thermidorian" overturn. (3) How to assure definitive victory to a revolution in a country as small as Cuba against a hostile power as colossal as the United States.

That these problems occupy the minds of the revolutionary leaders can be deduced from many indications. But as men inclined more to action than to theory, whose instinctive reaction to a blow is a counterblow in kind, they have not clearly articulated the large-scale problems they face.

In this they are different from the leaders of the 1905 and 1917 upheavals in Russia, who deliberately brought theory to bear as a most powerful means of advancing and defending the revolution and mobilizing support for it. Through theory, the Bolsheviks sought to think problems through to the end, the better to mold action and direct it in the most fruitful way. As the first great leaders of the revolutions of the twentieth century, the Bolsheviks thereby demonstrated that they stood on the shoulders of the leaders of the French Revolution, the Revolution of 1848 and the Paris Commune.

Because of this, it would seem that the theories and experiences of such men as Lenin and Trotsky would hold unusual attraction for the Cuban revolutionaries. Yet they did not turn in that direction in the beginning and it remains to be seen to what degree they will search the writings of these great leaders for deeper insight into their own revolution and its future course in this epoch of world upheaval.

On the problem of democracy, for instance, Castro has put up a sturdy defense against the attack of American imperialism and its spokesmen. The imperialists who backed dictator Batista have no right to talk about democracy in Cuba, Castro points out; nor have they any right to talk about defects of democracy in other countries while the Negroes in the South, among other minorities in America, are denied the most elementary civil rights. Moreover, the Cuban government has put into effect a most

radical measure of democracy — it has armed the population. Right now, a firm base for democracy in Cuba is being prepared through sweeping economic and social reforms, including a nationwide effort to eliminate illiteracy. Excellent as Castro's stand is, it still remains a defense.

The Bolsheviks went much further. They established a new type of democracy — proletarian democracy. Against the charge of Western imperialism that they had ended parliamentary democracy, the Bolsheviks responded, "Quite true!" Then they analyzed parliamentary democracy, showed how narrow it was and how in fact it was based on the denial of democracy to the great mass of people. In contrast, the soviets — councils set up by the workers and peasants and soldiers — extended democracy on an unheard of scale; and this new democracy was far superior to the limited democracy practiced by the capitalist powers.

The living example of a proletarian form of democracy was a most powerful means of winning support for the Soviet Union in the difficult early days, not only throughout Europe but in the United States.

That the democratic councils of workers, peasants and soldiers were later smashed by Stalin in the "Thermidor" that befell the Bolsheviks does not invalidate their accomplishments in this field. It simply shows that the domestic and international forces of reaction were so strong that not even proletarian democracy, in the conditions of the time, could overcome them.

A rebirth of proletarian democracy on Cuban soil would add powerfully to the defense of the revolution. Few things would prove more convincing to the American workers that this revolution opens new, attractive perspectives. Elsewhere in the world it would give incomparable impulsion to the tendency to emulate the Cuban example.

The Bolsheviks, ardent students of the French as well as other revolutions, were well aware from the very beginning that "Thermidorian" reaction threatened their revolution. They did not foresee its exact form and imagined that if it occurred, it would be through a violent overturn in a brief time. In their opinion this would prove inevitable if imperialism succeeded in isolating the revolution. Their policy, consequently, was to do their utmost to break the imperialist encirclement by extending the rev-

olution; that is, encouraging revolutionary movements like their own in other lands. As we know today, the political reaction in the Soviet Union was stretched out, taking the form of Stalinist degeneration.

The Danger of "Thermidor"

Is El Jacobino correct in judging that the chances of "Thermidor" in Cuba, whatever its form, are rather remote? A lot depends on the course followed by the Cuban revolutionary leadership. The causes of "Thermidor" in the Soviet Union were quite complex but included the exhaustion of the proletariat, the decline in revolutionary ardor among the peasantry and the isolation of the revolution through the "cordon sanitaire" set up by the imperialist powers.

It would seem apparent that Cuba, taken by itself, is not guaranteed against an analogous fate. The peasant, having won a plot of land, wants to enjoy it; workers can be worn out by too prolonged sacrifices, especially if privilege-seeking among official circles should develop to any significant extent; and Wall Street is obviously following the policy of seeking to isolate Cuba, suffocate it economically and put another puppet government in power.

But the Cubans of 1960 do enjoy a much more favorable world situation than that faced by the Bolsheviks in 1917-21. The Bolshevik Revolution made possible the establishment of planned economy and eventually the rise of the Soviet Union to world power. Assistance — as already demonstrated — is available today from the Soviet bloc, and the Cubans have done well to seek it. In addition, colonial uprisings during the past fifteen years have helped alter world relations enormously to the disadvantage of the old imperialist powers, including the United States. The possibility of Cuba obtaining economic and moral aid from the People's Republic of China is proof enough of that.

With new revolutions breaking out, such as those now seething in Africa, it will not be easy for the big corporations and their political agents in Washington to isolate and destroy the Cuban revolution at their leisure. One of the most favorable conditions for the Castro government is the inspiration provided by these fresh revolutions, which counteracts the tendency to relax or to become discouraged over the difficulties imposed by American imperialism.

Despite these pluses, the Cuban Revolution still re-

mains in great danger. The Cuban revolutionary leaders realize this, as is clear from virtually everything they do and say. This realization, coupled with their repeated declarations that they intend to carry things through to the end, are highly encouraging auguries. But it remains to be seen how well they understand the ultimate logic of the Cuban Revolution and how well they will succeed in fitting their action and theory to that logic.

Defense of the Revolution

The Cuban revolution is an event of major significance to North as well as South America. Not since the victory of the Chinese people over dictator Chiang Kai-shek in 1949 have the two continents been so stirred. The rise in fear among the reactionary property-holding classes is registered in the preoccupation of the capitalist press and the State Department over the "menace" that has appeared on the tiny island in the Caribbean. In contrast, the rise in hope among the workers and peasants throughout Latin America is visible in constant trade-union resolutions and popular demonstrations in support of Cuba. Moreover, the progress of the political, economic and social overturn in what was formerly one of Wall Street's holdings has inspired fresh political currents.

But the victory in Havana is not yet definitive. Arrayed against the Cuban people is the richest oligarchy in the world — America's billionaire rulers. They are cunning and ruthless. They have decades of experience in suppressing or diverting popular movements. They have vast economical, financial, political and military resources. To succeed against this formidable force requires strong nerves, the utmost determination and — correct policies. A great responsibility rests on the leaders of the Cuban revolution — and not only them, as I shall try to indicate.

To successfully defend the gains made thus far, they face crucial tests in four areas: (1) Continuation of the revolution in Cuba. (2) Extension of the revolution into the rest of Latin America. (3) Connection of the revolution with the fate of the Soviet bloc, including the tendency in those lands toward revival of proletarian democracy. (4) Establishment of solid ties with the most advanced layers of the American working class.

How well will the Cuban revolutionaries meet these tests? Some partial answers are already in.

Under attacks from the American monopolists and their agents in Washington, the Castro government has indicated its capacity to go far in expropriating capitalists as well as feudalistic landholders. Some of the requisites of planned economy have been established and the government is already operating a considerable sector of industry in a planned way.

One of the most heartening manifestations has been the recognition, among the main leaders, that the revolution could not stand still; that it had to move forward even to maintain itself. Their acceptance of the need to take continually more radical measures is an object lesson for revolutionary-minded forces throughout the world. This growth in revolutionary consciousness is a good augur for the future.

They have done well, too, in inspiring defense of the Cuban revolution on the continent. From Mexico to Chile and Argentina, Cuba has become a key issue in public life. In all likelihood the next revolution in any of the Latin-American countries will tend to follow the militant example of Cuba rather than that of Guatemala where a compromising attitude toward the old ruling circles and their armed forces facilitated restoration of reaction.

As victims of exploitation at the hands of Wall Street, the Latin Americans have much in common. They are also united by language, by background and culture, and by similar economic and social problems. Such mutual interests clearly indicate the need to form a United States of Latin America. The policy of the new Cuban government to seek closer solidarity with sister countries in Central and South America would gain much greater force if it were tied in with the explicit goal of a mighty co-operative federation reaching from the Rio Grande to Patagonia. This perspective, long supported by Trotskyists, has yet to become part of the political armament of the July 26 Movement.

Welcome Soviet Help

In respect to ties with the Soviet bloc, the Castro government has moved largely under compulsion from the blows rained on Cuba by the White House, Congress and the State Department. Without economic aid from the Soviet Union, China and the East European countries, the Cuban revolution might be speedily suffocated in the

coils of Wall Street. It should be noted that the aid was not free. It took the form of exchange of commodities and was therefore of mutual benefit. Coming when it did, however, this economic aid may well prove to be decisive in saving the Cuban revolution.

It is unclear as yet what political concessions the Kremlin may seek from Havana and how the demand might be handled. So far, the Castro government has demonstrated a strong tendency to maintain the country's independence in relation to pressures from all sources. Che Guevara has publicly declared that independence will be defended in relation to the Soviet bloc no matter what the cost. His declaration undoubtedly reflected the thinking of most, if not all, the leaders of the Cuban revolution. It may well turn out, as we have previously indicated, that the further development of the Cuban revolution will not strengthen dictatorial rule in the Soviet bloc but, on the contrary, help to loosen it by further inspiring the forces working for restoration of proletarian democracy.

Where the Castro leadership has proved weakest is in its appeals to the American workers and farmers. Cuba's cause is directly connected with the interests of the working people in the United States, many of whom are exploited by the same companies that have bled the island since the turn of the century. But boldness of policy in this field has been lacking. Instead the main bid has been to restore the tourist trade. There is nothing wrong with this, of course; Cuba has much to offer as a vacation land, including low cost. But the case for Cuba's revolution and appeals for help against the common foe located in Manhattan and Washington have not been presented with the needed energy and thoroughness. It is singularly difficult, for instance, to find even such elementary items as English translations of the speeches and writings of the Cuban leaders.

Perhaps one reason for this is the fact that the Cuban revolution has not reached the socialist stage where the international ramifications are clearly seen and followed. Its appeals have largely been nationalist in character. These can well serve to arouse the Cuban people for a time to heroic efforts and can serve as a stirring example to other countries in Latin America. But they are not sufficient to deeply move the American working class. Not even the far-reaching reforms already achieved in Cuba will catch

the imagination of the American workers although the Cuban fighting spirit may arouse enough sympathy and admiration to complicate Wall Street's effort to whip up a warmongering spirit against the small country.

The American workers would be much more inclined to respond to socialist appeals for international solidarity. They proved this after World War I when they rallied to the calls issued by Lenin and Trotsky. In 1919 the workers in Seattle even staged a general strike to protest American intervention against the Russian revolution.

It is quite true that the Stalinist bureaucracy succeeded in dissipating this good will; but the American workers are certain to respond with enthusiasm to a revolution that becomes socialist and clearly demonstrates that it is inherently opposed to everything dishonest, reactionary and despotic. And the American working class remains one of the most powerful forces on this earth.

What You Can Do

Whatever course the Cuban revolutionaries take, politically conscious sections of the American labor movement should do everything in their power to support Cuba's struggle for freedom from American imperialism.

The Cubans have the right to choose whatever form of government they want. That's an elementary democratic right, the very right on which the organizers of our American revolution stood. We are duty bound to support that right no matter what kind of government the Cubans decide to establish.

Besides that, we have a lot to gain from defending any revolution that weakens the power of the monopolies riding on our own backs. The Cuban revolution has already struck these monopolies some stinging blows and it is going to deal more. The Cubans are in much the same position as strikers who ask us to respect their picket lines in a tough battle. If they win we will be in much stronger position in our own battles with the same outfits.

Finally, no matter how well or how poorly the leadership of the Cuban revolution measures up to its great historic responsibilities, the revolution in its course tends to be socialist. Whatever help we can rally in the United States will strengthen that tendency. This has direct bearing on the greatest issues of our time — the struggle for enduring peace, the struggle to end poverty and insecurity,

the struggle for democracy and a world brotherhood based on planned economy.

As to what can be done specifically, first of all we can oppose the shameful policy of the top union bureaucrats who have been openly backing the State Department in its campaign against Cuba. Last May the AFL-CIO Executive Council joined in the "hate Cuba" propaganda, smearing the Castro government with the lying charge that it was "endangering the peace of the Western Hemisphere." This from Reuther and Meany, who are still linked with the foul agents assigned by dictator Batista to run the Cuban trade unions!

Against the pro-Wall Street policy of the top labor brass, union militants might well advocate such proposals as sending a local union delegation to Cuba to check the facts and report back to the membership.

In some areas union newspapers will publish letters from members on virtually any topic of labor interest. That's an avenue through which it is possible to spread the truth to new circles. If this leads to a debate, all the better. Nor should the letter columns of the local capitalist press be overlooked.

Another indicated step is to write the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, asking for facts and offering aid. The Committee is headed by Waldo Frank and Carleton Beals, both of whom are recognized authorities on Latin-American affairs. A weekly news letter is published by the Committee to provide information and expressions of opinion by independent-minded Americans. (Address: The Fair Play for Cuba Committee, 60 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.)

Other measures to help spread the truth about Cuba will no doubt occur to many trade-union activists and members of liberal and minority organizations. Suggestions of this kind can be mailed to the Militant which will be glad to give them publicity. (The Militant, 116 University Place, New York 3, N. Y.)

In doing our utmost for Cuba, we are only doing our duty. But it is not just a matter of conscience to help defend a small weak country that is being bullied by the United States. What we do to aid the people on this island ninety miles off the coast of Florida to win emancipation will aid our own struggle for a better world.

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